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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 2576

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 MEXICO 001237

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/MEX, WHA/PDA,
STATE FOR OES/IHB, PA, CAPRESS
STATE FOR MED/DASHO (MCFADDEN, RINALDO, KEYES)
STATE FOR MED/DIR (PENNER)
STATE FOR DS/IP/WHA
CDC FOR CCID/NCPDCID, CCID/NCIRD and COGH/DGPPC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [CASC](#) [KFLU](#) [KSQA](#) [TBIO](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: SITREP 12 - H1N1 Outbreak in Mexico

REF: MEXICO 1236

1. (U) SUMMARY

Mexico aimed for a return to normalcy on 5 May, with many re-openings scheduled for 6 May. The Secretary of Health put total confirmed H1N1 cases at 866 and confirmed deaths at 26. A chorus of indignation at discrimination against Mexicans abroad continued. The Secretary of Finance announced economic stimulus and offered a preliminary measure of the influenza's cost to GDP growth.

2. (U) FEDERAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: Finance Minister Carstens announced 17 billion pesos in economic relief measures the morning of 5 May (see economic impact, section 10). The Secretariat of Communications and Transportation looked to demonstrate that passengers were still flying and that the country's civil aviation system was functioning normally. Mexican lawmakers announced they would convoke the Latin American Parliament, an international organization composed of regional parliamentarians, to denounce "discriminatory practices" by several Latin American governments.

MEXICO CITY GOVERNMENT: Mayor Ebrard defended his cross-party-line cooperation with the federal government the day after a 4 May meeting with President Calderon. The city's Secretary of Government, Jose Angel Avila, provided new details on the planned 6 May re-opening of restaurants. Hours are to be limited from 0700 to 2200 and restaurants must reduce seating capacity by 50%.

3. (U) ACTIONS BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Archdiocese of Mexico issued a communique of reproach targeting those who, internationally and domestically, had seized on the influenza to discriminate against Mexicans. Singled out for special mention were China and the Latin American countries that had closed their borders to Mexico.

4. (SBU) STATISTICS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: In a 5 May morning press conference, Secretary of Health Cordova announced the number of confirmed cases had

reached 866, while the number of fatalities was steady at 26. According to the Secretary, the cases of 140 deceased individuals remain to be analyzed. The female-to-male ratio neared even keel in the overall case count, with women comprising 50.9% of confirmed cases.

STATE BY STATE: 27 states have confirmed cases. Below is the state-by-state breakdown compiled by the Secretariat of Health, as of 1700 hrs on May 4. State-by-state statistics do not align exactly with the overall federal count presented by the Secretariat of Health. A state by state breakdown of the May 5 statistics mentioned above is not yet available.

State-by-state Statistics (cases, deaths)

Aguaascalientes 5, 0
Baja California 18, 0
Baja California Sur 0, 0
Campeche 1, 0
Chiapas 10, 0
Chihuahua 4, 0
Coahuila 0, 0
Colima 10, 0
Distrito Federal 476, 24
Durango 2, 0
Guanajuato 1, 0
Guerrero 3, 0
Hidalgo 53, 1
Jalisco 0, 0
State of Mexico 87, 1
Michoacan 1, 0
Morelos 0, 0

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Nuevo Leon 4, 0
Nayarit 0, 0
Oaxaca 1, 1
Puebla 4, 0
Queretaro 2, 0
Quintana Roo 3, 0
San Luis Potosi 59, 0
Sinaloa 0, 0
Sonora 2, 0
Tabasco 6, 0
Tamaulipas 1, 0
Tlaxcala 21, 2
Veracruz 2, 0
Yucatan 1, 0
Zacatecas 34, 0
Not specified 3, 0
Total 822, 29

15. (SBU) MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Embassy Medical Unit reports no new cases in the Embassy community and awaits test results for one "probable" case and eight additional outstanding cases.

16. (U) SECURITY ISSUES

The Embassy will convene its Emergency Action Committee at 0900 on 6 May to discuss the evolving situation.

17. (U) CONSULAR ISSUES

The Embassy switchboard received 170 calls during the 24 hour period from 0700 4 May to 0700 5 May, an increase from low weekend call levels. 19 related to H1N1 directly, while more than 150 addressed passport and visa issues. Between 0700 and 1600 on 5 May, the switchboard fielded 43 calls. In the main, callers looked to schedule or reschedule appointments for consular services. Regular consular services will resume 11 May.

18. (U) CONSULATE ISSUES

GUADALAJARA: Although there have been no official reported cases of H1N1 yet in the state of Jalisco, local media report that in fact at the Hospital Civil, there might be eight cases. The State Health Secretary denies this, but anonymous inside reports from doctors there indicate these cases exist. One additional case was reported in Colima. Primary and secondary schools will prepare to open next week, and the major universities here have mostly indicated that they will open as normal starting tomorrow. Businesses are also returning to normal. The duty officer received no calls for ACS support over the last 24 hours.

HERMOSILLO: A second case of H1N1 has been confirmed in the Hermosillo consular district. The subject is an 8-year old male from Sonora and is currently receiving treatment. It is believed he contracted virus in the U.S. Sinaloa still has no confirmed cases. The Sonora Secretariat of Health announced it will not conduct passive inspections of southbound travelers coming into the state. The focus instead will go to a public awareness campaign regarding identification of symptoms, what to do if sick, where to go for help, etc. Sinaloa announced similar public outreach efforts, with renewed focus on rural communities. Both Sonora and Sinaloa will follow federal guidelines regarding the opening of schools. Universities will open this week and primary/secondary schools on 11 May. Over the last 24 hours the Duty Phone has experienced no calls from AmCits regarding H1N1.

MATAMOROS: The situation remains the same as the last few days. No cases reported, still light traffic going both ways on the bridge. High School classes resume 7 May and Elementary School classes resume Monday, 11 May. All classes in Brownsville resume 7 May. There are more people circulating on the streets and in restaurants and businesses. Things appear to be returning to normal.

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MERIDA: The situation remains much the same. Kinder and primary schools will remain closed through the end of the week. High schools and universities plan to re-open 7 May. Transportation checks and health screenings continue around the peninsula. Tourism contacts in Quintana Roo state that international travel agencies are pessimistic about summer travel and will focus instead on winter travel to major Mexican resorts, including Cancun and the Riviera Maya. Cancun international airport reports 32 flight cancellations on 5 May and 191 flights (104 international) still operating. The Consulate plans to reopen tomorrow and anticipates processing a number of lost and stolen passport applications built up over the recent closure. The Duty officer is receiving very few calls. The public remains calm but concerned about long term economic impact.

MONTERREY: State governors all attended the 4 May meeting with President Calderon, and announced the return of students to classes. State governments will clean schools and reemphasize student hygiene. State governments announced no other new measures against H1N1 flu.

Media reports discussed school re-openings, measures to clean schools, how Mexicans have been treated by other countries such as China (but not the U.S.), and the economic impact of the flu scare. Several newspapers quoted business leaders lamenting the large economic impact of the measures to prevent the spread of H1N1 flu. In Nuevo Leon, a representative of business association Coparmex estimated that 2 billion pesos were lost each day in productive activity. San Luis Potosi saw an 85% decline in commercial sales, 80% of businesses closed, and hotels at 10% occupancy. In Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, restaurant owners complained proposed sanitary measures of distances between patrons' tables were unrealistic. Nuevo Leon's business association Caintra protested the proposed fines on four manufacturers for not closing between May 1 and 5.

NOGALES: CBP reports normal to heavy northbound traffic at both Nogales ports of entry, consistent with local holiday travel. Northern Sonora still reports zero cases. The case count on the U.S. side of the border is also unchanged. Pima County has 6 confirmed cases (4 on Tohono O'odham Reservation, 2 in metropolitan

Tucson), Yuma County has 1 confirmed case (Yuma), Santa Cruz County has 1 confirmed case (Nogales), and Cochise County has no confirmed cases.

Visa services are suspended through 8 May. If services re-open sooner, H2 applicants will be contacted as soon as possible. ACS services continue with limited service for emergencies and the unit will accept passport/CRBA applications. The lack of uniform school closing policies in Arizona is causing some confusion. Schools in Metro Phoenix (with the vast majority of reported Arizona cases) will remain open, while the entire Nogales school system has closed (with only one confirmed case).

Visa service

TIJUANA: No new cases have been identified in Baja, although officials are still awaiting results on the last samples sent; there are at least 13 "suspect" cases pending results. San Diego now has 24 confirmed cases and 24 "probable" cases. Border crossing wait times appear to be back to normal. The Duty Officer reports no flu-related calls over the past 24 hours. The restaurant industry reported a 40% decrease in business during the past week/weekend, according to restaurant association CANIRAC. CANIRAC is placing part of the blame on the U.S. media portrayal of the H1N1 flu as affecting all of Mexico, while Baja -- in CANIRAC's description -- remains calm and relatively unaffected. James Gerber, director of the Center for Latin American Studies at San Diego State University and an economist, stated the obvious -- the flu is "...likely to be very, very expensive" for Mexico. It is generally agreed that, though, that businesses in Baja have not been as hard hit as those in Mexico City.

19. (U) MEDIA REACTION/GENERAL POPULATION SENTIMENTS

Media coverage on May 5 in the Mexican media focused on the announcement of President Calderon of the return to "normality." An enthusiastic Milenio headlined its feature story "Good News." "Thanks to the actions taken by the government and the people, we are ready to begin resuming our everyday lives," stated President

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Calderon. According to authorities, most economic activities will resume Wednesday, 6 May, universities and high schools will restart classes Thursday, 7 May, and primary and secondary level schools will do so on Monday, 11 May. Other businesses like movie theaters and bars will remain closed until further notice. Secretary of Health Cordova announced reports of new hospitalizations had dropped 80% and the number of confirmed cases increased to 866, with fatalities steady at 26. Other media outlets were less enthusiastic in their headlines but reiterated the message: "Businesses open tomorrow, classes start on Thursday" (La Cronica); "Progressive return to schools" (El Universal); "A conditioned return to normality is decreed" (La Jornada); "High schools, universities resume classes on Thursday" (El Sol de Mexico); "Economic activities to be resumed" (Uno mas uno). Newspaper La Cronica's editorial warns, "We must be fearful of the epidemic and act intelligently and prudently. If we act otherwise, then consequences could be fatal. We must not make the mistake to believe that we have defeated the virus. This ain't over till it's over."

Also very prominent in the media was President Calderon's public reproach of countries that have taken actions against Mexico. "In the name of all Mexicans, I ask every nation that has taken actions that negatively affect Mexico and don't really help to stop the outbreak to cease them...I express a strong rejection of these discriminatory measures." There was a lot of reaction in the media and in the international community. The French ambassador to Mexico went on the radio to announce the arrival of antiviral medicine donated by his country. The ambassador of Argentina offered a public apology for the measures taken by President Kirshner to cancel flights to and from Mexico and for having referred to Mexico as a "sick country." Spain's ambassador agreed with President Calderon and condemned discriminatory measures against Mexicans, while reiterating his country's solidarity. The Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) started a campaign to defend the image of Mexico. SRE's Subsecretary for multi-lateral affairs asked the U.N. to publicly condemn discriminatory measures. The U.N. Secretary General stated his condemnation of "exaggerated measures...that

affect economies, societies and peoples." Press reports also mentioned the WHO director's call not to stop flows of people, products and services. Most opinion makers supported the President's call. "I don't like the way some countries have reacted...I expected something very different from Latin American countries. Let us hope for the sake of good diplomatic relations that this can be corrected," stated Radio 13 commentator Javier Solorzano. Excelsior analyst Jorge Fernandez Menendez added, "Fear has torn us apart. The measures taken by some countries do not follow WHO protocols and target Mexicans specifically." The good relationship between the U.S. and Mexico was highlighted once again with reports of the meeting of President Obama with Ambassador Sarukhan in Washington for Cinco de Mayo celebrations.

Finally, another crucial news item was President Calderon's announcement that his economic cabinet will meet to come up with a stimulus package to face the added economic challenges brought on by the influenza outbreak. The tourism sector is expected to reap the most benefits from this package, which includes tax cuts and ad campaigns.

110. (U) ECONOMIC IMPACT -----

At a press conference the morning of 5 May, Finance Minister Carstens acknowledged that H1N1 will have a "significant" impact on Mexico's economy. Based on his ministry's study of similar incidents in other countries, the impact could be between .3 and .5% of Mexico's GDP. Some sectors -- tourism, dining, and lodging -- have suffered more than others. However, Carstens stressed that Mexico will recover quickly, and President Calderon has instructed his administration to make it so.

Carstens outlined various economic supports to help Mexico recover quickly. If the impact reaches .5% of Mexico's GDP, tax collection will fall by 10 billion pesos. However, the Mexican government will not implement new taxes to recoup these estimated losses. To protect employment, the government will discount 20% of employee's social security and other fees, not to exceed 35,000 pesos per employee. Employees will also see a reduction of their flat-rate

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business income tax, which will reduce Mexican businesses' overall tax bill by about 2 billion pesos. Businesses in Mexico's tourist industry will benefit from other reductions in payroll taxes and the hotel tax. The federal government will also compensate the affected Mexican states for the loss of tourism with 500 million pesos. Air traffic control fees and cruise line docking fees will be halved, and financing will be made available to provide liquidity for affected businesses. Proposed measures total approximately 17.4 billion pesos.

Around Mexico City, businesses are re-opening, including department stores, auto mechanics, hair salons, and pet stores. Commercial activity has picked up, grocery stores are packed, fewer face masks are evident, and the traffic has returned. People appear eager to return to normalcy.

111. (U) TRANSPORTATION -----

The GOM's announcement of aid to the aviation sector buoyed spirits today as airlines put flesh to their plans to reduce the new overcapacity on Mexico routes. Flight cancellations continued across the country but few travelers experienced difficulty reaching their destinations. American announced an expected reduction in flights, cutting daily round trips from 42 to 31 but maintaining service to all 14 stations.

112. (U) U.S. ASSISTANCE -----

President Calderon received the CDC's Mexico team leader, Dr. Steve Waterman, at Los Pinos on 5 May. The President expressed thanks for close U.S.-Mexico cooperation in responding to the H1N1 outbreak.

